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ABSTRACT

This handbook is intended to provide information and guidance to school boards as they consider their role in school reform and restructuring. It begins with an outline of essential components of successful school reform, as well as factors that retard reform, so that boards can learn from the experiences of others and evaluate reforms against these criteria. It continues with an overview of the areas of reform, focusing on a comprehensive approach that may involve changes in the following areas: (1) curriculum and instruction; (2) professional development of faculty and staff; (3) governance and structure of schools and districts; (4) school-finance structures; (5) facilities improvement; (6) parent and community involvement; (7) student support services; and (8) accountability. The handbook concludes with a discussion of the roles and responsibilities of governing boards in reform and restructuring. Although often not included in reform efforts in the past--because of an emphasis on decentralized decision-making and site-level change--boards have the power to support, or inhibit, meaningful change through their vision, policy creation, and other efforts. Appended is a collection of examples of state and national reform models and initiatives currently being implemented by schools and districts. (Contains 25 references.) (WFA)

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Making Changes That Improve Student Achievement: A School Board's Guide to Reform and Restructuring.

California School Boards Association

1997

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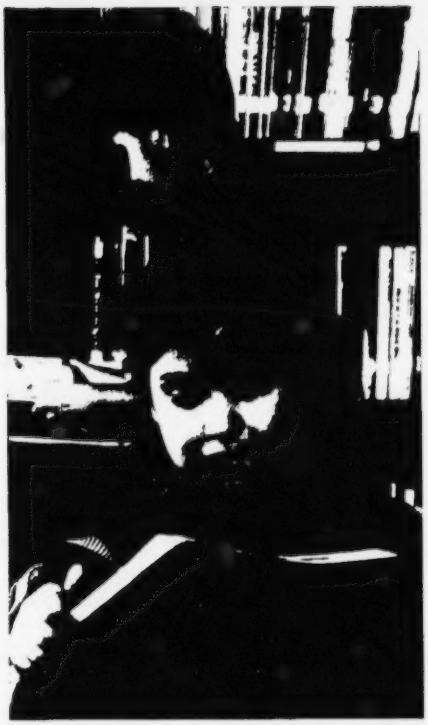

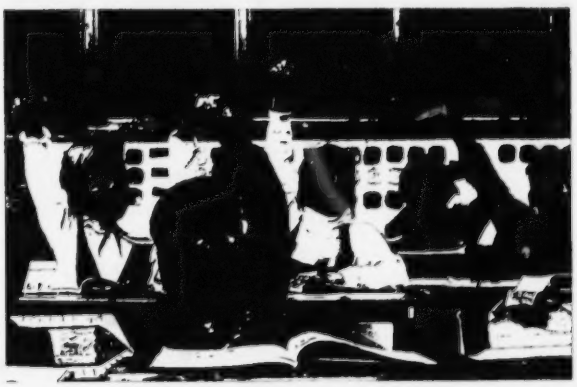

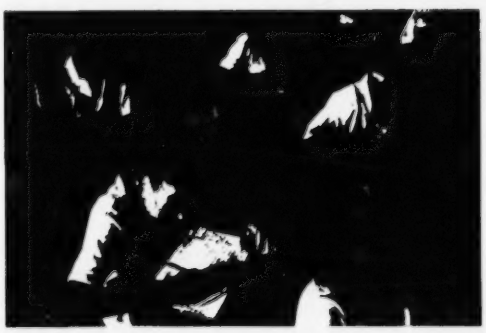

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MAKING CHANGES THAT IMPROVE STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

A SCHOOL BOARD'S GUIDE TO REFORM AND RESTRUCTURING

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PREFACE

School board members must be leaders, visionaries, supporters and facilitators of educational innovations. Their role in school reform and restructuring should therefore be an active one, but it should also be an appropriate one that empowers school staff, parents, community members and students to become engaged in school improvement.

This handbook is intended to help boards understand their role in reform and fulfill this role in a way that will maximize the likelihood of success in terms of improved student achievement. It was developed by CSBA's Reform and Restructuring Committee, established in 1996 to provide recommendations and information about reform and restructuring issues.

This committee is charged with examining structural reforms taking place in California and the nation; providing information about the board's role; identifying effective, inclusive processes for determining and accomplishing school change; encouraging further study on how reforms affect students; identifying and suggesting ways to overcome obstacles to positive reform; and making recommendations regarding the association's policy positions related to reform and restructuring.

Additional information about CSBA's beliefs and policy positions related to reform is provided in the association's policy platform. The platform contains a comprehensive set of specific actions which describe what is truly needed at the local, state and national levels to reform education.

I. INTRODUCTION

Do our schools need to be "reformed" and "restructured"? Of course they do, if "reform" and "restructuring" refer to efforts to make continuous improvement in student achievement by focusing on agreed-upon priorities and needs.

Any change, especially whole-system change, can be threatening. Students, parents, school staff, district staff and governing boards may feel more comfortable with the status quo. However, schools are not and cannot be static institutions. Students change, staff and board members change, communities change, expectations change.

> *"Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there.'*
>
> *— Will Rogers*

Therefore, the best reason to think about continually reforming schools is one based on necessity and a desire for continued growth. Global and technological changes require new skills of workers, and are causing schools to raise standards and to think about new ways of integrating academic and vocational education. Economic changes have increased the link between schooling and income level and made successful completion of high school and postsecondary education even more critical (California Education Policy Seminar and the California State University Institute for Education Reform, 1996).

To meet these changing needs, school reform ideally should be proactive, not reactive. It should be driven by a *vision* for transforming education, not a piecemeal program-by-program approach. School boards, working with the superintendent, staff, parents and community, must determine what students need to know and be able to do, and then must figure out how to accomplish this most effectively. Making these determinations is perhaps the most difficult task facing school boards and educators today. It requires an arduous process to build consensus on educational priorities. It requires a willingness to try new ideas and seek new approaches. It requires continual evaluation of progress and informed decision making based on evaluations of what works and what doesn't.

Too often, major changes are made in our schools for the wrong reasons. Quick fixes or panaceas are proposed as a response to perceived educational failure. Educators or reformers rush to demonstrate that they are taking action to solve the so-called educational crisis. Or, educational strategies may be based on faulty research or address secondary concerns that have nothing to do with student achievement.

There may be a lot of legitimate reasons for reforming and restructuring schools. Improved staff morale, increased parent and community involvement and greater efficiency in school operations are all worthy goals in their own right. However, by far the most important goal of school reform is high student achievement. Since it is unrealistic to expect schools to devote equal time, resources or energy to every problem, priority must go to efforts that have the most potential to impact student achievement. Each proposed and existing

reform effort must be evaluated with this goal in mind.

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

To be effective, reform and restructuring must be envisioned, implemented and evaluated in a thoughtful way. In 1993, the California School Boards Association identified several key assumptions in which any reform plan must be grounded. These assumptions continue to provide a framework for education reform at the local, state and national levels:

It is essential to establish what is true and what is not true about schools and education achievement.

Misperceptions about our public schools have been promoted by public school critics and repeated by the media until the public has started to accept them as fact. In reality, these perceptions are often based on poor or biased research or distortions of statistics. Most schools in the state are making tremendous progress and offer innovative programs that often go unnoticed. It is essential that the truth about achievement tests, dropout rates and other indicators be sorted out so reforms can be targeted to true problem areas.

Education reform should not be discussed in a vacuum, as though schools were isolated from the problems of families, neighborhoods and society as a whole.

While schools have an obligation to provide a high quality education regardless of the circumstances impacting students outside of the classroom, external variables have an impact on student learning.

Children spend more time in their homes and communities than they do in the schools. To be successful, any education reform plan must also address the needs of children and their families. The roles of all players – family, community and government – must be determined to ensure that these needs are met.

REFORM AND RESTRUCTURING are defined as:

accomplishing significant, agreed-upon changes needed in the education system that will result in continuous improvement in student achievement

There is no one right answer to the variety of problems faced by individual students or the challenges faced by schools and communities.

Reformers must resist the temptation to offer just a few quick fixes that are supposed to solve all education problems. Many factors impact schools and learning, and all these issues must be addressed systematically. A comprehensive approach to education reform must address conditions of children, curriculum and instruction, facilities, funding and finance, governance and structure, professional standards, program and fiscal accountability and student diversity.

Education reform is not a new concept.

The history of public education is a history of reform and restructuring (see p. 13). Change and improvement are an ongoing process, not a single event. California's schools have been implementing a variety

of reforms in recent years; some of these reforms have been demonstrating real promise, while others have not proven to be as successful. New reform efforts should build upon existing efforts which have resulted in gains in student achievement.

Naturally, the specific reforms implemented within each district or school vary considerably. Some reforms are initiated at the district level and some at the site level. Some are developed locally and some follow a state or national model. Some address a single area such as governance and some are intended to change the entire school culture. Some are voluntary and some are required by state or federal law.

Although this handbook does not recommend specific programs, it does call for *meaningful* reforms focused on student outcomes and tailored to the real needs and capabilities of the district or school site. It also recognizes the importance of the reform-development process itself. An inclusive, thoughtful process is needed to ensure that the reforms will be supported and sustained through what can be a long and difficult path to improvement.

The process used to develop reforms is as important as the particular reforms ultimately chosen. After all, how can a district or school expect to be successful in implementing any reforms without the buy-in of parents, staff, students and community?

PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is intended to provide information and guidance to school boards as they consider their roles in school reform and restructuring. It discusses essential components of successful reform, as well as factors that impede reform, so that boards can learn from the experiences of others and evaluate proposed reforms against these criteria. Areas of reform are considered next, recognizing that a comprehensive approach to reform may involve changes in curriculum and instruction, professional development, governance and structure, finance, facilities, parent/community involvement, student support and/or accountability.

Finally, this handbook looks at the unique roles and responsibilities of governing boards related to reform and restructuring. Boards often are omitted from the reform process because of an emphasis on decentralized decision making or other site-level changes. Many reformers are now realizing, however, that the board's

The board has the power to support (or inhibit) reform through its roles related to vision, policy, curriculum/program accountability, finance, human resources, collective bargaining, community leadership and coordination.

involvement and support are critical to successful reform. The board is elected to represent the community and provides citizen oversight and accountability for the community's schools. The board's support provides the systemwide commitment needed to sustain reform even when a school site loses a key leader or runs into other difficulties in the implementation of reforms. The board has the power to support (or inhibit) reform through its roles related to vision, policy, curriculum/program accountability, finance, human resources, collective bargaining, community leadership and coordination.

RECENT STATE AND NATIONAL REFORMS AFFECTING SCHOOLS

1971	The California Supreme Court's decision in Serrano v. Priest causes the state legislature to address equalization of school funding.
1978	Proposition 13 limits property taxes, changing state vs. local contributions to school finance and decreasing school funding overall.
1983	The National Commission on Excellence in Education releases the landmark reform report A Nation at Risk.
1983	SB 813 initiates comprehensive reforms, including longer school day and year and increased graduation requirements.
1987-92	State task forces issue recommendations for grade-level reforms ("Ready or Not," "It's Elementary," "Caught in the Middle," "Second to None").
1988	Proposition 98 establishes a minimum funding allocation for K-14 education.
1988	SB 1422 Advisory Committee on Teaching is created to make comprehensive recommendations on the recruitment, preparation, certification and support of new teachers.
1989	Six national education goals are adopted by President Bush and the National Governors Association.
1990	SB 1274 establishes state grants for school restructuring.
1991	SB 620 establishes Healthy Start grants to foster interagency collaboration in the delivery of education and support services.
1992	Charter school legislation is passed, establishing 100 public schools governed by their own charters and freed from state and district regulation.
1993	Public school choice is enacted, mandating intradistrict open enrollment and establishing an option for interdistrict open enrollment.
1994	The Goals 2000: Educate America Act is signed by President Clinton to expand the national education goals and establish programs to support their achievement.
1994	The Improving America's Schools Act reforms Title I and other federal programs.
1995	AB 265 requires the development of state content and performance standards and new state assessment system.
1995	The standards-based Challenge Initiative is introduced by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin.
1996	The Class Size Reduction Program (SB 1777, SB 1789) focuses on reducing class sizes to 20 in grades K-3.
1996	The Governor's California Reading Initiative (AB 3482) seeks to change reading instruction through a professional development program for K-3 teachers, preservice training, leadership training and core reading instructional materials.

II. ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL REFORM

Districts and schools implement reforms with the hope and expectation that meaningful results – especially improvements in student outcomes – will occur. Evaluations of some reforms show real promise, while others have had disappointing results or have not been in existence long enough to evaluate. How can a district or school choose the type of reform(s) that will best meet its needs?

What is clear is that the *process* of selecting, implementing and evaluating reforms may be as important as the particular reform chosen. In other words, a careful assessment of student needs, the process of building consensus among stakeholders, the level of support provided to sustain the reforms and careful attention to other implementation issues are essential to produce positive results.

> "It's not enough to have good ideas; you have to be able to implement them and sustain them. ...Achieving gains ... meant hard work and careful, sustained implementation. No program was found that a school's leadership could just throw into place and then walk away."
>
> California Education Policy Seminar and the California State University Institute for Education Reform (1996), pp. 8, 14

Reform is *not* easy. It requires patience, understanding, hard work and true teamwork. When the initial excitement wears off, the commitment of the board, staff, parents and community is tested. But if districts and schools ensure that certain key components are in place, the potential success of any reform ultimately selected will be enhanced. Experience and research already have indicated a number of these key components. Likewise, some factors that inhibit successful reform have been identified.

This section describes nine components of successful reform that schools and districts should keep in mind as they embark on an effort to improve student achievement through reform and restructuring. Although the focus is on *local* reform efforts, these elements could apply to state and national reform efforts as well.

1. Reform must be based on agreed-upon needs in the system.

Before a plan of school reform can be developed or implemented, it is essential to clearly articulate the goals of the reform. The ultimate goal of any reform, of course, should be improved student outcomes. However, each community may have a different idea of what this means.

Governing boards are responsible for adopting a districtwide vision through a process that involves the superintendent, district staff, school site staff, parents and community members (see Section IV). This vision should describe what the district wants its schools to achieve; it provides a definition of a quality education and the district's expectations for students. Because this vision should drive everything else in the district, it needs to

NINE COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL REFORM

1. Reform must be based on agreed-upon needs in the system.
2. Reform must be developed through a process that includes all stakeholders who share a long-term commitment to the reform.
3. Reform must be tailored to the unique needs and goals of the school, district and community.
4. Reform must be supported through training and staff development so that staff can successfully implement the reform.
5. Reform must be sustainable with the available resources and over time.
6. Reform must be supported by the board, which establishes the policy, curriculum and financial direction of the district.
7. Reform must be aligned with and connected to other district or school-site efforts.
8. Reform must include communication with the public about the reform and reasonable expectations.
9. Reform must contain an evaluation component that demonstrates improved student outcomes and specific indicators of success.

have the strong support of the entire school community.

It is unrealistic to expect any particular reform strategy to address all the district's goals, however. Goals must be clear and finite (e.g., ensuring every student learns to read by the end of the third grade). If a school identifies three or four goals, it may have a chance of actually accomplishing them; if it adopts 25, it is inevitable that it will fail at virtually all of them (California Education Policy Seminar and the California State University Institute for Education Reform, 1996; CSBA, 1996, *Vision*).

Identification of goals and priorities must begin with an identification of the present strengths and future needs of the district. This needs assessment should be based on reliable information about the district and about educational issues, including information about:

- *demographic characteristics of the student population*, including gender, ethnicity, languages spoken, number of special education students, AFDC recipients, enrollment patterns;
- *student achievement levels and patterns*, including test scores, course enrollments, student attendance, graduation rate, suspensions and expulsions and so on (disaggregated data on subgroups of students ensure that the unique needs of all students are considered);
- *current programs*, such as funding levels, recent cuts and program evaluation data;
- *characteristics of staff*, such as length of time teaching and staff development needs;

- *adequacy of facilities, technology, other resources*;
- *VALID research* about how children learn, effective instructional methods and student diversity issues; and
- *current educational, economic and societal trends and legislative initiatives* that may impact education (CSBA, 1996, *Vision*, pp. 17-18).

The district's vision provides overall direction to all its schools, but the needs of individual school sites may vary. Therefore, the unique characteristics of each school site – its staff, its students, its parents, its academic circumstances – must be identified and considered as reforms are developed and implemented.

2. Reform must be developed through a process that includes all stakeholders who share a long-term commitment to the reform.

The willingness of the school, district and community to undertake a particular reform has a tremendous impact on its effectiveness and sustainability. To build this level of commitment, it is essential to involve all the stakeholders from the very beginning. This means involving them in the process of identifying needs and goals, as discussed above, and also in the process of selecting or developing reform strategies for the school.

A top-down approach in which the district develops a reform plan alone and hands it down to schools, or in which school administrators develop a plan and hand it down to other school staff, results in skepticism and resistance. Ownership and shared responsibility cannot be built this way. Likewise, a reform based at one school site may run into difficulty if it fails to obtain district-level support. And if school-site decisions impact other schools or inadvertently circumvent the board's appropriate authority, resentment and even overturning of decisions may result.

These problems can be avoided by thinking through the process carefully and identifying those individuals and groups whose input and involvement would make a real contribution. Responsibility must be clearly defined. Will the board make the final decision on specific issues or delegate authority to others? Whose input would be critical? Key players may change from district to district or school to school. The board, superintendent, other district staff, school administrators, teachers, classified staff, parents, students and community members should be involved in any broad reform plan. Involving the "community" may take a concerted effort to identify and involve representatives from local media, business, community-based organizations, city and county governments, local colleges and universities, or others as appropriate.

There is broad agreement about the importance of inclusiveness in the reform process. Yet, one study found that the full,

Building consensus for reform, bringing together all the key players in an inclusive process, is time consuming and difficult. It requires setting aside turf issues and working toward the best interest of students. It requires communication and trust. But the effort will pay off in broad support, deeper commitment and fewer problems in the long run.

active commitment of the district, school administration and faculty was rarely sought (California Education Policy Seminar and the California State University Institute for Education Reform, 1996), and another found that dialogue in schools has widened to involve committed teachers but that parents, community members, instructional aides and support staff have not been involved in a meaningful way (Olsen et al., 1994). This suggests that districts and schools need to make greater efforts to recruit and involve a broad cross-section of stakeholders in the planning process. In addition, outreach should be conducted as necessary to ensure that participation reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of the community. The involvement of people with varied interests and perspectives lends credibility to the results.

The process used by each district or school to involve stakeholders will vary. Some may establish an advisory committee; some may hold a series of public hearings throughout the area. Others may use board meetings as opportunities to obtain public input or schedule meetings with community groups or individuals. It is probably best to use more than one method and provide multiple opportunities for involvement. These opportunities must be well publicized to staff, parents and community members.

Of course, it is impossible to obtain the complete support of 100 percent of the staff and community, and there will always be some persons who feel they were not involved. The district or school must do its best to build consensus but then must keep moving forward (CSBA, 1996, *Vision*).

Having a principal or teachers who are not committed to the program makes successful implementation especially difficult. It is helpful to have the flexibility to choose a principal and teachers who are supportive of the program. For example, California's charter school law gives teachers the option of staying with the regular district schools if they choose not to participate in a charter school. The New American Schools in Memphis have a union contract that allows teachers to opt out of the reform (Olson, 1997), and a study of selected Title I programs found that the ability of staff to "transfer with dignity" made for a stronger program (California Education Policy Seminar and the California State University Institute for Education Reform, 1996). Similarly, intradistrict and interdistrict choice programs give parents an opportunity to choose the public school that best fits their goals for their child.

3. Reform must be tailored to the unique needs and goals of the school, district and community.

The extensive processes described above should result in a clear understanding of the district's needs and goals. When it comes time to make a decision about a particular reform plan, it is important to ensure that the plan matches these needs and goals. If the district has a priority on addressing the needs of English language learners, does the reform plan address instructional strategies and support services for these students?

Sometimes districts or schools create their own reform plan from scratch. This is the easiest way to ensure that the reform efforts are truly tailored to the needs and goals of the district and community. It also may be easier to coordinate programs and efforts, or to build ownership of everyone in the school community, when the reform plan is home grown. The difficulties are that it can be a time-consuming process

and that it requires a certain level of expertise and experience to develop a plan.

Often districts or schools decide to choose a reform model that was developed externally. They find that many of their needs and goals are addressed in whole or in part by a national reform model or a state project, or that another district has a good idea. They may join a reform "network" – that is, an organization that provides assistance or links a group of schools working on the same problem in a common way (Education Commission of the States, 1997, p. 4). A reform network may promote a theory of teaching and learning, a vision of the conditions that support teaching and learning, and sharing of information among schools. Examples of state and national projects are presented in the appendix, and include such networks as Essential Schools, Accelerated Schools, the Annenberg projects and others.

Even when a district or school starts with an external model, however, it is expected to develop its own specific plans within the framework of the model. For example,

QUESTIONS ABOUT REFORM NETWORKS

A reform network is an organization that links a group of schools together under a common vision or theory about educational improvement and provides assistance to those schools.

The Education Commission of the States (1997) suggests a number of questions that should be asked by districts or schools when considering a reform network:

- ❑ **Is there a good fit between the content of the network's work and the district or state standards to which the schools are held accountable?**
- ❑ **Are the network's structure and organizational capacity adequate to serve the number of schools and teachers that will participate?**
- ❑ **Are the network's reform emphasis, methods and philosophy aligned with the district's and school's policy infrastructure and reform priorities?**
- ❑ **Do the focus and methods of the reform network fit with community and school needs and interests, including cultural context and values, public opinion, leadership, ongoing reform efforts?**
- ❑ **Is the network willing to evaluate its efforts and be held accountable for results?**
- ❑ **Can the network demonstrate effectiveness under relevant state (and district) accountability systems?**
- ❑ **Is the network flexible enough to create the organizational contexts in which it can be successful?**
- ❑ **Does the network have the capacity to provide the ongoing support and technical assistance that schools and teachers will need to implement the reforms?**
- ❑ **Does the work of the network build the capacity of schools and educators to continue the effort and to work toward continuous improvement?**

participation in a state program may require that a school provide a plan for improving professional development, but the school needs to develop a plan that meets its own needs. The advantages of adapting an existing program are that it may save time and effort and come with resources and/or technical assistance. The danger lies in choosing a model simply to obtain those resources without a clear understanding of how the model aligns with the district's and school's reform goals.

4. Reform must be supported through professional development so that staff can successfully implement the reform.

No matter what type of reform is adopted by a district or school, by definition reform means significant change, and staff needs assistance in implementing those changes. Time needs to be devoted to staff development focused on the reforms. Teachers may need new knowledge or skills to implement a new curriculum or to use technology in new ways. Or all staff may need help understanding and fulfilling their new roles in shared decision making.

Wohlstetter and Griffin (1997) argue that there needs to be greater focus on curriculum and instruction issues in professional development if student achievement is to be improved. In a study of selected charter schools, they found little consistent professional development focused on curriculum and instruction issues. When professional development did exist, there was greater focus on school culture-building.

In addition to formal inservice training, staff needs sufficient time for planning and for dialogue with colleagues about issues of teaching and learning. Opportunities for such dialogue should be systematic and built into the schedule, rather than relying on the initiative of individual staff members. Districtwide reforms or state/national reform networks may provide opportunities for staff from different schools and classrooms to support and learn from one another.

Leadership skills also are essential to the success of any reform. Even in decentralized systems, the strong leadership of the superintendent and principal keeps everyone motivated and focused on student achievement. It is easier to implement significant changes when the principal has strong management experience as well as experience with school change. But even then, most reforms present new challenges and demands, and perhaps new roles and responsibilities for school administrators. Administrators may need help understanding their new roles and balancing school decision-making processes so that they are inclusive and yet efficient.

5. Reform must be sustainable with the available resources and over time.

Successful implementation of reforms requires adequate, sustained funding; sufficient staffing; technical assistance; and a stable, supportive environment. Such feasibility issues should be considered *before* a reform plan is adopted. The board must be provided with information about expected costs, new staffing requirements and the expected time for implementing proposed changes.

Given the reality of limited financial resources, restrictive requirements for using funds and increased demands on school systems, it may seem impossible to find the resources needed for reform. Yet, schools will never progress if they wait for ideal conditions. When the desire for

reform is there, boards must take a hard look at their financial situations in order to find a way to make it work.

Allen Odden, professor at the University of Wisconsin, calculated the average cost of a New American Schools reform design in Memphis as $200 to $700 extra in per pupil spending (Olson, 1997). This estimate was based on a 500-student school with one principal and 20 teachers and covered additional professional development, materials, instructional facilitator and special features such as a tutor or enhanced technology. The costs of other reforms in other circumstances may vary widely, so budget estimates need to be based on proposed new expenses and existing resources of each school.

Sometimes reforms are funded by reallocating existing funds, but new funding may be needed. State or federal grants (e.g., SB 1274 restructuring grants, Healthy Start grants, Goals 2000 grants, Title I funds) are typical sources of funding for reform efforts. Private foundations or local businesses also may contribute.

The difficulty usually comes in sustaining the funding for reform. Districts and schools need to be wary of "soft money" which will disappear in a year or two. They need to know when grants apply only to planning or early implementation stages, leaving districts to find other sources of funding in subsequent years. If the district or school chooses to pursue such funds anyway, it must have a long-term funding plan to provide for the continued implementation and growth of the reforms.

There are other types of needed resources besides funding. Technical assistance and information may be needed. Reform networks can provide targeted assistance with curricular, instructional or other issues and effectively disseminate information and ideas throughout the network of schools. County offices of education or staff development providers may offer professional development in the topics identified by the district or school; it is important to ensure that the philosophy and content of the trainings match the philosophy and goals of the school's reform plan.

Finally, sustainability requires a deep commitment and willingness to stick to the reform plan. A supportive environment is one that is not repeatedly shifting its priorities or approach. It is based on an understanding that effective reform takes time, perhaps years. The board encourages staff to take risks and understands that wrong turns will be made along the way. Major shifts are not made each time the board or administration turns over or a new fad comes along. Rather, change in the reform plan occurs only when adequate time and evaluation processes show that change is needed because sufficient progress is not being made.

6. Reform must be supported by the board, which establishes the policy, curriculum and financial direction of the district.

The role of the governing board is rarely mentioned in reform proposals, yet the board has the ability to make a significant difference in the effectiveness of reforms. As discussed in Section IV, the board can support reform through its vision for the district, its policies, budget, curriculum guidelines, collective bargaining agreements, staff hiring and evaluation guidelines, community leadership and coordination function.

For example, it is the board that makes the final decisions about funding allocations which impact the ability to provide professional development or address other areas of reform. If site-based management is a reform goal, then board policies should provide greater flexibility for school sites to make policy decisions. And the board's selection and evaluation of the superintendent should reflect its view of the type of leadership needed in a progressive district.

The strong leadership and support of the board are needed even when a reform is based at an individual school site rather than being a districtwide effort. It is inevitable that each school site will have different approaches to reform or different implementation issues, and the board needs to provide that flexibility to school sites. However, all schools must still be held accountable for making progress toward their school goals and the overall goals set by the district's vision. Furthermore, a strong team of both district and school leaders behind the reform provides consistency of expectations and builds the confidence of the entire school community. If key staff changes occur at the school site, the viability of the reform may depend on the continued commitment of the superintendent and the board.

> *"Restructuring does not mean 'everyone just doing their own thing."*
>
> *— California Department of Education (1989), p. 3*

7. Reform must be aligned with and connected to other district or school-site efforts.

Piecemeal, isolated reforms are often perceived as add-on programs and therefore fail to receive a strong level of support and commitment from staff, parents or the community. They may depend on the initiative of a few individuals and thus be at risk if those individuals leave the school system. A reform will have a greater chance of becoming embedded in the school structure and culture if it is integrated with other district or school-site efforts.

Continuity, consistency, coordination. These are key to making whole-school or whole-district change. Any reform should be designed to support the overall vision and goals. Standards, curriculum and assessments should be aligned; they should be consistent at the same grade level and across grade levels. Supplementary programs should complement regular school programs. A plan to increase the availability of technology should be tied to classroom instructional methods and professional development. The efforts of individual teachers to improve their teaching should be linked to schoolwide reform efforts.

Sometimes reforms are attempted at one school in the hopes that the school will then serve as a "model school" or "leadership school" for other schools in the district or state. State or national demonstration grants or pilot projects usually have this goal in mind. To impact an entire school system, however, there needs to be greater dissemination of information between schools and a plan for the expansion of reforms that show promise.

8. Reform must include communication with the public about the reform and reasonable expectations.

Because the public may be skeptical of education reform efforts or may have unreasonable expectations for immediate or dramatic results, a communications strategy is needed to provide ongoing information throughout the development, implementation and evaluation of reforms. Communications should be proactive and coordinated. A communications plan should identify key messages the district wishes to convey, strategies tailored to different audiences, timelines for each activity and spokespersons (CSBA, 1996, *Community Leadership*). Through the media, public meetings, newsletters and so on, the public should be helped to understand the goals and issues of reform and progress achieved as a result.

Communication, however, should be a two-way street. The public is one of the stakeholders in education, so members of the public should be involved at the earliest stages in the development of a district vision and school reforms. They also should be involved in any continuing advisory groups or school-site decision-making bodies, and should have other opportunities to provide regular feedback on the reforms.

The Education Commission of the States (1997) notes that public resistance to reform can be lessened if the public is made a true partner in the reforms. This is accomplished by establishing real dialogue and by understanding what the community wants from its public schools.

The public's desires may not always be communicated directly, perhaps because of apathy, intimidation, a feeling that input is not welcome or a lack of understanding of educational systems and lingo. Boards

PUBLIC OPINION OF SCHOOL REFORM

Schools' priorities should be on safety, an orderly learning environment and teaching basic academic subjects such as reading, writing and math, according to a survey of 1,100 Americans. The majority of the persons interviewed believe in higher standards but also believe that standards are not enough. And they believe that learning should be enjoyable but are uncomfortable with many of the new instructional approaches.

"Leaders [need] to stop, to listen, and to give the public's point of view the same attention and respect, the same consideration, they naturally give to the 'experts.' Leaders, if they choose to listen empathetically to the public's point of view, face three choices. One, [they] may decide that the public's concerns require genuine changes in leadership's agenda. ... Second, leaders may determine — after an honest and candid self-appraisal – that the public's views stem from misunderstanding, and to respond with better, more effective communications. ... In a third course of action, leaders may decide that the public's point of view (in whole or in part) is mistaken. This decision demands the exercise of real leadership — the slow, exacting process of building a constituency for ideas that are not popular, but that are worthwhile."

— Public Agenda, 1994, pp. 38-39

may misinterpret the comments of a few individuals at a board meeting as being representative of the community at large. Therefore, board members need to pay close attention to try to determine the real concerns and needs being expressed, and they need to be out in the community listening to the public and inviting broad participation and involvement.

9. **Reform must contain an evaluation component that specifies indicators of success, especially indicators related to improved student outcomes.**

The goal of reform and restructuring is to make significant changes that result in continuous improvement in student achievement. Therefore, reform efforts need to be evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in producing desired student outcomes. More often, benefits such as teacher empowerment, parental choice or community satisfaction are discussed. These outcomes are important and should be assessed. But the link to improved student outcomes needs to be made if governing boards and others are going to feel justified in giving money, time and support to these efforts. Such outcomes should be measured in terms of years, not months, although progress should be assessed regularly.

Ongoing progress reports on the status of the implementation of reforms should be available to the board, parents and the community. These progress reports should be linked to the activities and timelines outlined in the reform plan, and should clearly show the completion of specific activities and the next steps planned. Opportunities should be available for feedback from various stakeholder groups. In addition, districts, schools and individual staff members should be expected to continually reflect on their practices and discuss how to improve programs. Regularly scheduled, internal meetings may provide an opportunity for staff members to vent their frustrations, examine what's working and what's not working, and recommend changes.

For long-term evaluations of reform efforts, the difficulty is in determining how to measure performance. McDonnell (1992) believes that the current state of research is insufficient to establish a causal link between a particular strategy and student outcomes, so a "logical link" needs to be established. It is true that it is difficult to isolate the effects of site-based management or a new professional development strategy when multiple reform strategies are probably being implemented at the same time.

Still, it is reasonable to expect multiyear evidence of changes in student performance. Disaggregated student data (e.g., by gender, ethnicity, language group, participation in certain programs) should be used to determine district, school and program effectiveness in serving *all* students. Boards need to know how to interpret student outcome data and how to use the data to make decisions about programs. The idea is not to abandon promising programs too quickly but rather to make adjustments as needed and to give programs enough time to work.

Evaluation of performance, of course, is only the first step in ensuring accountability. *Consequences* need to be built into the system in order to have any real impact. Depending on the evaluation results, consequences may include incentives and rewards, additional professional development or other forms of assistance, changes in personnel or changes in the reform strategy.

POTENTIAL PITFALLS

Failure to have one or more of the nine components discussed in this section will reduce the likelihood of success. Studies of specific reform efforts have identified other factors that interfered with reform in certain schools (California Education Policy Seminar and the California State University Institute for Education Reform, 1996; McDonnell, 1992; Olson, 1997; Pemberton, 1991). These included:

- selection of a reform design based on limited information;
- merely adopting the rhetoric of reform as a kind of tokenism;
- failure to have a comprehensive strategy (i.e., fragmented, isolated programs);
- lack of attention to feasibility issues;
- budget cuts or threats of budget cuts;
- lack of technology or other needed resources;
- reluctance of staff members to participate;
- turnover of superintendents or board members;
- failure to socialize new principals into the new program;
- restrictive contract provisions related to working conditions;
- a teacher's strike;
- lack of preparation by teachers or parents for quick implementation of major reforms;
- rigidly prescribed or mandated forms of site-based management;
- lack of district support;
- unavailability of assessments; and
- abandonment of a reform too quickly in favor of another new program.

Some of these factors cannot be anticipated, but many can be avoided through careful planning, strong leadership and a serious commitment to the reforms by the entire school community.

III. AREAS OF REFORM

In an effort to improve student achievement and keep up with changing demands, public schools have instituted a number of reforms covering some or all aspects of the education system. Common areas of reform include curriculum and instruction, professional development/human resources, governance and structure, parent/community involvement, student support/services, finance, facilities and accountability. Nationally, the recent focus has been on setting goals for education and developing national standards. In California, major reforms since the 1980s have included changes in school structures and education financing, but the focus of reform has been on curriculum and instruction.

Many legislative changes are narrowly focused on single topics such as class size or professional development. Sometimes, however, reforms are broader and attempt to make wide-scale change. Reform models and networks emerging across the state and nation often focus on comprehensive or whole-school change.

Local school districts, county offices of education and individual school sites have adopted a variety of these strategies and/or created their own areas of focus. The challenge is to identify areas that are likely to have the most impact on student achievement in a particular district or school and to coordinate the various programs and policies for maximum efficiency and outcomes.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Because the ultimate goal of education reform is high student achievement, curriculum and instruction are, and should be, a major focus of reform efforts.

CSBA's policy platform (1997) states that every student must have access to a challenging instructional program which is relevant and fully prepares each student to enter the work force and/or go on to postsecondary education. The instructional program should be based on a strong core curriculum, supplemented by programs to assist students with individual needs and strengths. The curriculum must be reinforced by high-quality instructional materials and access to up-to-date technology that assists students in learning. Teachers must use a variety of instructional methods tailored to the needs and learning style of each student. Finally, the amount of instructional time should be maximized and greater individual attention to students should be provided through smaller classes or an increased number of adults in the classroom.

Recent reform efforts are addressing many of the themes identified by CSBA. For instance, the development of ***high academic standards*** is being addressed at the local, state and national levels. In California, the Commission for the Establishment of Academic Content and Performance Standards, established by AB 265 (Ch. 975, 1995), is developing statewide academic content and performance standards in all core curriculum areas for consideration by the State Board of Education. These standards will be used to align the state assessment, curriculum frameworks and instructional materials in a comprehensive effort to drive teaching and learning based on the skills and knowledge expected of all students.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin's Challenge Initiative, introduced in 1995, is another example of a standards-based reform effort. Partici-

pating districts are expected to adopt standards in core curriculum areas for all grade levels. Course requirements and accountability are linked to those standards. Nationally, projects conducted by the National Standards Project and professional organizations have provided model standards in a variety of subject-matter areas.

Accurate assessment of students' knowledge and performance is critical to identify the strengths and needs of individual students and the effectiveness of district programs. Student assessments must be appropriate for the culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse student population of California. They also must be aligned with standards and the curriculum in order to be useful to teachers. California's testing system has seen many changes in recent years and is currently undergoing another reform. AB 265 (1995) established a new statewide assessment system with a mandatory state component and an optional local incentive program. The state assessment, currently being developed, will reflect new state standards and test all students in grades 4, 5, 8 and 10. The local incentive program was changed in 1997 when, as part of state budget negotiations, the governor's testing proposal was accepted; a single nationally norm-referenced test of basic skills at each grade level will now replace a bank of approved tests from which districts could choose.

Instructional strategies are another important area of reform. As research discovers more about how the mind

THE VALUE OF STANDARDS

"If they are utilized effectively, standards are an essential component of education reform. . . . In essence, standards establish a destination. They help leverage the resources and support for schools to ensure the success of each individual student. In doing so, they:

- Clarify for students what is expected of them
- Allow parents to understand what their child is expected to know and be able to do
- Help teachers and administrators focus on curriculum and instruction, while still providing flexibility in how the curriculum is taught
- Help districts determine how well they are preparing their students and evaluate district programs
- Bring community stakeholders together over their children's educational needs and expectations
- Allow school districts, states and the nation to determine comparable expectations and results across school systems
- Provide for the alignment of core curriculum, instruction and assessment within and amongst school districts to provide a seamless education for all students"

— *CSBA, Standards: Tools in Education Reform (1997c)*

acquires and processes information, this new knowledge should be incorporated into teaching practices.

Typically, teachers have great discretion in selecting instructional strategies based on their own experience and the needs of their students. Restructured schools, however, often encourage a specific approach to instruction depending on the school's educational philosophy. Common strategies emphasize individualized learning and the need to tailor instructional methods to meet the needs of each student. The Coalition of Essential Schools incorporates such a strategy, calling for schools to develop goals that apply to all students but to tailor the way in which students may accomplish those goals. The coalition's approach also is based on the principle that students should be more active learners and accept responsibility for their own learning.

Other instructional strategies include cooperative learning, increased teacher-student contacts, team teaching or cross-discipline approaches, as recommended by the SB 1274 restructuring program as possible strategies to meet higher subject-matter standards. The Accelerated Schools project provides an approach to teaching at-risk students through high expectations and a challenging curriculum (i.e., educational strategies traditionally associated with gifted and talented students), rather than remedial classes. Schools participating in the New American Schools Development Corporation use a variety of instructional strategies depending on which of seven reform models they chose; their strategies may include unique student groupings, hands-on learning and new teacher roles as "coaches."

Scheduling practices and ***school/class structures*** also are being reformed specifically to address teaching and learning needs. Longer school days or school years, block scheduling and smaller class sizes are frequent strategies of reform. California's Class Size Reduction Program focuses on reducing class sizes in the elementary grades. The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) established an ungraded primary school program in which students are grouped and regrouped based on individual learning needs, interests and learning styles, rather than chronological age or number of years in school, until they are ready to enter grade 4. KERA further provides for continuing educational opportunities beyond the minimum school term for students who need more time to achieve the state standards.

School-to-career programs offer a new approach to integrating academic and vocational instruction.

The use of ***technology*** is increasingly viewed as essential to support teaching and learning. It has the potential to engage students in the curriculum and gives them access to information and resources; it also equips them for a highly technological society and job market. Thus, many efforts have focused on increasing the availability of computers and other technologies and preparing staff to use these technologies effectively. An example of a reform effort which integrates technology to a large extent is the Co-NECT school design which is part of the New American Schools Development Corporation. Technology is viewed as a way to support effective methods of teaching, learning and assessing students and managing schools. A school-based com-

puter network is used for both internal communications and accessing the world. It is backed up by training, technical assistance and hotlines.

Finally, sometimes reform is focused on ***specific curricular areas***. Mathematics and reading/language arts have been topics of a great deal of attention in California in the past several years. CSBA (1995b) produced recommendations for state and local actions needed to improve reading performance, and State Superintendent Eastin established two task forces to make recommendations for reading and math instruction. The California Reading Initiative of 1996 supported the reading recommendations through instructional materials, preservice and inservice training for K-3 teachers, and leadership training programs which placed greater emphasis on the teaching of phonemic awareness, systematic explicit phonics, spelling patterns and other fundamental reading skills.

Clearly, improvements in curriculum and instruction must be ongoing and based on research about how children learn. Instruction also must be supported by effective professional development, parent involvement and other areas of reform discussed below.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/ HUMAN RESOURCES

A high-quality curriculum and bank of instructional strategies are useless unless school staff is able to use them effectively. Teachers must be knowledgeable about child development and skilled in engaging students in the curriculum; they also must serve as positive role models whose attitudes and expectations facilitate learning (CSBA, Policy Platform, 1997a).

Effective administrators are essential in providing support to the teaching staff, promoting parent and community involvement and ensuring the efficiency of school operations. Therefore, all staff must be highly trained and motivated. Recruiting good staff, strengthening their skills and evaluating their performance on a regular basis must be top priorities.

Of course, the availability of qualified certificated staff is a joint responsibility of K-12 schools and institutions of higher education. ***Teacher education and administrator preparation programs*** in colleges and universities need to be reformed to meet the challenges of today's schools. Greater collaboration is needed between higher education staff and K-12 educators to determine what those challenges are.

The state's ***certification system*** also should be reviewed and streamlined. An effort to do that is being conducted by the Advisory Panel for the Comprehensive Review of Teaching Credential Requirements established by SB 1422. Its recommendations and subsequent legislation are expected to address types and levels of credentials, types and content of preparation programs, induction of teachers into teaching, assessment in teacher credentialing, professional development for the renewal of credentials, supply and demand, policies for out-of-state and out-of-country candidates, and collaboration among institutions.

A national effort to set high professional standards has been conducted by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This voluntary program does not certify completion of minimum standards; rather, it attempts to recognize highly accomplished teaching practices. Experienced teachers may seek to attain a

certificate which shows they have been judged by their peers as having met a set of rigorous professional standards.

The focus of most staff-related reform efforts, however, is on ***continuing education and professional development*** of current staff. Continuing education is essential to ensure that all staff maintain their skills and keep up to date on recent developments in their fields. Two California projects associated with the Annenberg Challenge have a strong emphasis on professional development which includes encouraging discourse and dialogue among colleagues about teaching and learning. Other reform efforts encourage staff development in specific topics needed to support restructuring (e.g., shared decision making, team building) or in specific curricular/instructional areas (e.g., reading instruction, use of technology, student diversity).

In a few cases, reformers attempt to make changes in ***working conditions*** for staff in the belief that higher quality staff will be attracted and retained. For example, the Coalition of Essential Schools believes that competitive wages for staff, along with ample time for planning and collaboration, are critical and that funds should be provided by reducing peripheral school services.

As the official employer of certificated staff, the board needs to be aware of changes to the teacher credentialing program. Even though the board's involvement in personnel issues is limited (see section IV), the board is ultimately responsible for ensuring accountability for the qualifications of staff.

In addition, county boards have unique responsibilities related to retraining of staff and the issuance of temporary certificates to teachers whose credentials are being processed. Through these roles, they have an opportunity to support reform efforts by improving relevant skills of teachers.

GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE

One of the biggest trends in education reform is toward ***decentralization and deregulation.*** At the state level, there is occasional talk of reducing excessive state regulation and providing greater flexibility to districts or schools. The charter school movement is one example of this type of reform. California's charter school law sets up an experiment with a limited number of schools to test the theory that freedom from state laws will encourage innovation and result in higher student achievement.

More typically, reform and restructuring efforts focus on moving authority from the district level to the school-site level. It is believed that greater decision-making authority should be given to school site staff who work closest to the students and who thus presumably can make decisions that better meet the needs of their students. Parents and community members often participate in school governance structures.

Many districts have already instituted some form of site-based management. They have school site councils as required by law for participation in certain programs such as the School Improvement Program or School-Based Program Coordination. Many also have chosen to establish other school-based advisory groups and/or to delegate certain educational or operational decisions.

The SB 1274 restructuring program, Accelerated Schools, Annenberg Challenge, Challenge Initiative, Coalition of Essential Schools and LEARN all include site-based decision making as a key element of the program. Under the Kentucky Education Reform Act, schools in that state are mandated to have site-based management under the terms and conditions specified by the state legislature: School site councils consist of three teachers, two parents and the principal and have considerable authority over curriculum, instruction and selection of the principal.

> ***In California, 70 percent of public schools reported having a site-based decision-making body in 1993-94, compared to 56 percent nationwide.***
>
> ***— U.S. Department of Education (1996)***

Except in cases where specific types of shared decision making are mandated, the governing board has the right, and the responsibility, to clearly delineate the types of decisions that will be made at the site level (e.g., decisions about curriculum and instruction, funding allocations, personnel). The board needs to strike a balance between decisions made at the district and site levels – it needs to ensure that its own district policies do not interfere with the authority granted to sites to make policy decisions and yet cannot allow sites to make decisions that would impact other schools or the district as a whole. The board also needs to hold decision makers accountable for results, while recognizing that the ultimate accountability continues to rest with the board.

Decisions by the board to delegate authority must always consider the true goal of any reform – high student achievement. As a study of shared decision making in charter schools showed (Wohlstetter & Griffin, 1997), schools with the greatest autonomy from their districts were able to use money in new ways and experimented with school schedules and curriculum, but they also were more consumed by managerial decisions and day-to-day issues of running a school. Furthermore, schools struggled to find a balance between a desire for total inclusiveness among staff on one hand and, on the other, a concern for more efficiency and timely follow-up. To work effectively, shared decision making still requires strong leadership and management experience of school administrators and a strong organizational capacity to support teaching and learning. As University of Southern California professor Priscilla Wohlstetter has said, "You cannot assume that people at the school site are all of a sudden going to use that [new] power in a way to improve curriculum and instruction."

Another type of reform involves increasing ***parental choice*** of the school their child attends. A number of states have been

faced with legislative proposals or ballot initiatives which would provide publicly funded vouchers to parents and give them the choice of sending their child to any public or private school. Proponents of vouchers argue that competition among schools will cause them to improve their educational programs, whereas opponents worry about reducing financial support for public schools and the conflicts inherent in providing public funds for religious schools.

Currently, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, offers vouchers to low-income students to attend nonreligious private schools. A Cleveland, Ohio, plan to give vouchers to low-income students to attend private *and religious* schools was overturned by an Ohio appeals court on the grounds that it violated federal and state constitutional provisions barring government aid to religion (Walsh, 1997).

California recently provided increased parental choice within the public school system. In 1993, AB 1114 mandated intradistrict open enrollment and AB 19 provided a new optional method of interdistrict open enrollment.

Often overlooked in reform proposals addressing school governance or structure is the ***role of the governing board***. On rare occasions, reformers have called for "new" structures and roles for governing boards which place greater emphasis on their role as "policy boards" (Twentieth Century Fund, 1992), or have called for the elimination of boards altogether. In some urban areas, such as Chicago, board elections have been replaced by mayoral appointments, which changes the nature of board accountability.

Local boards fulfill critical roles in setting the vision for the district or county office of education, establishing structures that support that vision, holding the system accountable and providing community leadership and advocacy on behalf of children and schools (CSBA, 1996). It is appropriate that education reforms seek ways to involve parents, teachers and others in school decisions, but the board's unique functions must not be circumvented.

When delegating authority to school sites, the board needs to do what it can to make sure shared decision-making structures work. It needs to ensure that school site leaders are prepared to take on these new responsibilities. Then it needs to back up its decision to delegate authority by allowing schools to make decisions as agreed upon. But it also needs to keep an eye on how those decisions impact the district as a whole.

CSBA believes that local governing boards represent the most fundamental element of a democratic society and are the basic embodiment of representative government (Policy Platform, 1997a).

PARENT/COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Most education reforms recognize the importance of meaningful parent and/or community involvement in schools. Often this involvement takes the form of ***participation in school governance structures*** or advisory committees, as discussed above. But parent and community involvement is needed in other important ways too.

CSBA (1991) believes that, as the child's first teachers, parents influence the child's early attitudes about learning which later affect his/her interest in school and achievement. Children spend more time in their homes and communities than they do in school, so it is not surprising that home and societal influences play a large role in determining the condition in which the child arrives at school and his/her ability to profit from the school experience. A healthy, safe, nurturing ***home environment*** is more conducive to learning.

Parents' ***participation in their child's education and in school activities*** also should be invited and welcome. Such involvement sends a message that education is important. Parents should be encouraged to serve as volunteers in the classroom or school. They should be informed about and involved in the child's lessons, homework and school activities. When parents need support to fulfill these roles, parent education or other types of assistance should be available.

Parent involvement is considered so important to student learning that it was added as a national education goal under Goals 2000 in 1994. The goal is that, by the year 2000, "every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of children." Parent and/or community involvement also is a stated goal of the Challenge Initiative, LEARN, Kentucky Education Reform Act, SB 1274 restructuring program, New American School Development Corporation, Coalition of Essential Schools, Annenberg Challenge and many other reform efforts.

Even though parent involvement is often a goal of reform, a California Tomorrow study (Olsen et al., 1994) found that schools had difficulty realizing the high level of parent involvement they wanted. Furthermore, few schools had an active parent body that represented the linguistic, cultural and racial composition of the students. Additional supports or mechanisms to facilitate parent involvement are needed.

STUDENT SUPPORT/SERVICES

To be successful in school, many students require a variety of support services. One model for providing student support has the ***school as the focal point of service delivery***. Schools and districts may provide health services, child care and development programs, parent education, counseling and intervention programs, job counseling and training, and nutrition and food services (CSBA, Policy Platform, 1997a). And of course, schools have a clear responsibility to ensure safe campuses and to provide academic supports.

However, as McDonnell (1992) writes, "Even the best-run schools cannot overcome the effects of poverty and the related problems of child abuse, drug addiction, and delinquency on their own."

It is for this reason that many schools have begun to address the "whole child" through creative, ***collaborative efforts*** with other local government agencies (e.g.,

health services, social services, law enforcement) and community organizations. Collaboration is difficult. Effective service delivery is often impeded by fragmented or duplicated programs, and collaboration requires overcoming significant attitudinal, programmatic, financial and legal barriers (CSBA, 1995; CSBA, California State Association of Counties, & League of California Cities, 1992). Still, education reform can no longer be an isolated enterprise. Schools must be viewed as part of a larger community, and solutions must be developed which take into account the conditions and resources of that community.

Collaborative partnerships allow community resources to be spent more efficiently. Funding responsibility can be delegated to the most appropriate agency or shared among agencies. Creative uses of staffing, facilities and equipment also may relieve the burden on schools or other agencies. Waste and duplication can be reduced.

More and more communities have begun to establish community-wide task forces, commissions or councils to work on coordinating service delivery. Others have informal partnerships with the business community, cultural organizations or local colleges and universities.

California's Healthy Start initiative (SB 620, 1991) encourages interagency collaboration to more effectively deliver education and support services. Since 1992, the state has awarded 344 planning grants and 220 operational grants to help consortia of agencies and organizations meet the needs of children and families. Services integrated through this program include family support, basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, transportation), medical/health, mental health and counseling, academic/educational support, employment, recreation and income maintenance (e.g., Medi-Cal, AFDC).

Local collaboratives also have been encouraged by several joint and individual projects of CSBA, the League of California Cities and the California State Association of Counties. A series of children's summits held in 1992, follow-up publications and task forces have provided practical information about collaboration for elected officials and school, city and county staff (CSBA, 1995; CSBA, California State Association of Counties, & League of California Cities, 1992).

Most recently, the three organizations joined together to create the CCS (counties, cities, schools) Partnership to facilitate increased collaboration among the state's counties, cities and schools. The partnership's goals are to encourage and share successful programs and remove barriers to collaboration. It is expected to address such issues as youth violence prevention, integrated children's services, sharing of public facilities and land use planning, welfare reform implementation, joint training of personnel, educational programs about the role of local governments, community-based problem solving and neighborhood conflict resolution.

In Kentucky, family resource and youth services centers have been established throughout the state. These centers provide preschool child care, after-school care and full-time care when school is not in session. They also provide health and family assistance.

Clearly, gains have been made in recognizing the link between the conditions of children and families and educational outcomes, and the responsiveness of

schools and other agencies to those needs has improved. Yet, significant reform that would dramatically alter how education, social services, health services and related systems operate has not yet occurred on a large scale. That is, a comprehensive policy on children and youth has not been developed at the state or national level. Therefore, it is expected that this will be a growing area of reform in future years.

FINANCE AND FACILITIES

Rarely do reform efforts look at school finance and facilities, yet both have a tremendous impact on schools' ability to serve students and to effectively implement other reforms.

Underfunded and inflexible ***school finance*** systems are incapable of supporting the changes needed to lead schools into the 21st century. Education finance must be simple and equitable, and provide sufficient resources that give schools the ability to provide full and quality services to all students. In California, voters passed Proposition 98 in 1988 to provide a minimum level of funding for schools, yet funding is still inadequate to meet growing expectations of schools or state and federal mandates. Local revenue options are limited in that approval of tax and bond obligations by a majority of voters is not enough for passage.

A comprehensive review and reform of the state's school finance structure is needed in the same way that attention has been paid to other areas of reform. Among the issues that must be addressed are the relationship between state and local revenue, disparities in state support among districts, categorical funding growth and flexibility, and timelines for budget adoption that would allow districts to have better information for planning purposes.

The condition of ***school facilities*** also impacts teaching and learning yet often is overlooked by reformers. Schools cannot reduce class size, incorporate technology, ensure school safety or provide health or social services without sufficient school facilities to meet those needs (CSBA, Policy Platform, 1997a). School facilities must be viewed as an instructional tool which, if well designed, well maintained and free from overcrowding, can help support education reform.

Boards must be explicit about their expectations and ensure that their districts develop long-range master plans for the construction and rehabilitation of school facilities. Such plans should take into account current and projected school enrollments; the district's educational goals; educational program requirements; student safety and welfare; an evaluation of existing buildings and modernization/renovation needs; state planning standards and local zoning requirements; the community's social, economic and political characteristics; and estimated costs associated with meeting the district's facilities needs (CSBA, sample board policy #7110, February 1996).

At the state level, adequate, stable funding for school facilities needs to be provided. In addition to ongoing bond efforts, funding was specifically earmarked in 1996 to assist districts in modifying, constructing or relocating facilities as part of the Class Size Reduction Program. This provided a needed boost for school facilities across the state but the need continues to outweigh the available resources. In addition, state funding processes and regulations for school facilities must be streamlined and coordinated.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Along with the increased flexibility and inclusiveness typically associated with education reform comes a call for greater accountability for results. Districts, schools, teachers or others may be given more authority or autonomy for implementing changes, but in return there is an expectation that they will be held accountable. What exactly does this mean, however? What level of performance is expected from schools or individuals, what measures will be used to determine their level of performance and what consequences will result?

Because so little is known about how to effectively hold people and institutions accountable, the area of accountability remains one of the biggest impediments to successful education reform. Clearly, improved assessments are needed and multiple evaluation measures should be used to assess performance (see section II, p. 23). Administrative functions (e.g., completion of forms and compilation of reports) may be increased and require additional administrative staff. Furthermore, an effective accountability system should emphasize positive incentives and assistance to perform at a high level as opposed to punitive consequences. Additional efforts are needed, however, to help states and local school boards understand and implement accountability systems.

What types of accountability systems are currently in place?

- Accountability for governing boards usually means that they have a responsibility to evaluate programs, district finances and the superintendent's performance, to monitor progress toward district goals and to report to the public. If they fail to do their jobs, consequences follow – such as negative press, the failure to be reelected or even recall of board members.

- Staff may be considered to be held accountable through the evaluation process. Consequences may include continued employment, advancement and other forms of recognition or, on the other hand, discipline or dismissal. Reforms in California's tenure process have given districts more leverage in dismissing staff for unsatisfactory performance, but additional reforms are needed to improve staff evaluation methods and to enable districts to apply appropriate consequences based on performance levels.

In an attempt to improve staff evaluations, recent state law in Alaska incorporates parent and community responses into teacher and administrator performance evaluations. A similar system will be implemented in Rochester, New York, following the September 1997 approval of a teacher contract which gives parents an opportunity to provide input into teacher evaluations and allows teachers to critique administrators. The contract stops short of basing promotions or salary increases on what parents have to say (Lawton, 1997).

A system holding individual staff members accountable was proposed in the Philadelphia school system. The so-called "professional responsibility" program, as originally approved by the local board, would hold teachers more accountable by linking pay raises and performance reviews directly to student achievement and allowing a teacher with chronically low-performing students to be dismissed. High-achieving schools would receive bonuses of up to $1,500 per teacher and $500 per paraprofessional staff member to be spent on school programs and services.

As implementation of the Philadelphia plan has begun, the focus has been on an incentive system of bonuses or penalties for the superintendent and senior staff, based on both academic and nonacademic indicators. The district's accountability plan for other employees includes the following principles: (1) establishing rigorous expectations of school performance; (2) providing adequate resources and authority to achieve results; (2) holding schools or small learning communities, rather than individual teachers, accountable; (3) determining consequences based on the increasing or decreasing proportion of successful students in a school; (4) using achievement data for all students, even those with disabilities; and (5) comparing each school with its own previous performance, not with other schools, so that all schools have an opportunity to perform at the level required to receive rewards.

Some districts or schools have experimented with "reconstitution" (see appendix), in which all staff in low-performing schools are removed and replaced with new staff; existing staff must reapply if they want to remain.

- As decision making is decentralized to school sites and to broader groups of stakeholders, accountability becomes less clear. Responsibility or accountability is said to be shared by boards, district staff, principals, teachers, classified staff, parents and community members.

When lines of responsibility are not clear and consequences do not apply to individuals, there is a danger of "passing the buck." In a decentralized system, everyone needs to accept responsibility for student achievement.

As an example, each school participating in LEARN is accountable for demonstrating progress toward the goals outlined in its site action plan. But *how* they are held accountable for improving student achievement and meeting school performance goals has proven problematic. As noted by Butler (1996), there was near-universal support for the concept of accountability among LEARN schools, but a commonly held definition of accountability was slow to emerge. It was accepted that "stakeholder groups" (e.g., teachers, principals) should be accountable, but none of the schools appeared prepared to hold individuals accountable. In general, most participants did not feel comfortable using measures of student achievement to hold either individuals or groups accountable, nor did they feel that satisfaction surveys were sufficient.

- Charter schools presumably are held accountable for meeting the terms and conditions of their charters in that they must demonstrate positive results to their sponsoring agency or risk losing their charter. However, Wohlstetter & Griffin (1997) found that, in three states, accountability requirements from sponsoring agencies tend to be weak. Assessment information is required but rarely are there clear performance standards or consequences. Rather, charter schools are expected to establish their own performance goals and accountability systems. Standards of fiscal management have played a larger role than academic or other outcomes in determining whether or not a charter is reissued.

- Fiscal accountability for California school districts was addressed by AB 1200 (1992), which provides for fiscal oversight of district finances by county superintendents and consequences for fiscal difficulties which may include state intervention. State intervention has been tested in the Compton school district since 1993, when a state-appointed administrator was granted the powers of the local board in exchange for giving the district a $20 million loan. The seven-member elected board was allowed to operate in an advisory capacity only. Critics claim there has been frequent turnover of state administrators (five administrators in four years), failure to make significant gains and lack of a plan for returning the district to local control.

- State intervention based on "educational bankruptcy" (i.e., academic reasons) rather than fiscal reasons exists in a number of states. For instance, in 1989, New Jersey took over the Jersey City schools. And now, nearly half the states have laws that allow them to intervene in low-performing schools or districts, according to the Education Commission of the States. In Illinois, responsibility for running the Chicago school district was turned over to the mayor instead of state officials when the school board was dissolved in 1995.

- An explicit system of rewards and sanctions for academic accountability also was attempted as part of the Kentucky Education Reform Act. If a school is "successful" according to standards developed by the state board, it will receive monetary awards. If a school's proportion of "successful" students declines by less than 5 percent in a biennial review, the school must develop an implementation plan, will be assigned a distinguished educator as an advisor and will receive school improvement funds. If the proportion declines by 5 percent or more, or if a school fails to meet its goals, all certificated staff are put on probation, parents have a right to transfer their children, distinguished educators are assigned to assist and to evaluate staff and recommend needed personnel actions, and the school must develop an improvement plan. Finally, if the district as a whole has a declining proportion of successful students for two consecutive biennial periods and fails to meet timelines and performance goals, the superintendent and board members will be removed.

- California is in the process of examining appropriate rewards and interventions for schools and districts that succeed or fail in achievement of state academic standards. The State Board of Education is required by SB 1570 (1996) to develop a plan by the end of 1997, and has established a Rewards and Interventions Advisory Committee to make recommendations. The plan must address financial and other positive incentives as well as intervention and other negative incentives. CSBA (1997b) has cautioned the advisory committee to avoid sanctions that will harm students, such as financial sanctions that give districts even less access to resources, an arbitrary state-imposed reorganization or break-up of a district or closing of a school, or removal of the local governance of the district.

A STUDY OF FIFTEEN ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS

A report issued in 1997 by the Southern Regional Education Board (cited in Keller, 1997) found that, in the 15 southern states in its consortium, rewards for positive school performance are less widespread than sanctions. Only 6 of the 15 states provide financial rewards to either schools or individual teachers.

On the other hand, 12 of the 15 states have a system of sanctions. Sanctions range from firing employees and moving students to other schools to closing the school. Usually those sanctions kick in only after a school has received outside assistance such as expert advice, more money, or both. About 5 percent of the schools in those states have been identified as unsuccessful enough to justify severe consequences.

Finally, SREB found that only a third of the southern states have taken a "truly comprehensive" approach to accountability. SREB argues that the greatest possibility for success lies in an accountability system which includes rewards, sanctions, assistance, state-level standards and school-by-school reporting to the public.

IV. THE BOARD'S ROLE IN REFORM

The critical first step in supporting education reform is attitudinal – the governing board needs to be receptive to the concept of change. This should not be difficult given the desire to keep up with the changing needs of students in a changing economy and society. In fact, the board has an opportunity and a responsibility to provide leadership to ensure that reforms go beyond rhetoric and become meaningful in the district.

To do so, the board must fulfill its unique roles in establishing a district *vision*, establishing structures that support that vision, ensuring accountability and providing community leadership. Throughout these functions, the board must work together as a *team*, work closely with the superintendent, raise questions, anticipate problems, anticipate benefits of reform, address feasibility issues and support the reforms in its public statements and its decisions.

Many types of reform and restructuring call for new roles and responsibilities within the school system. Greater flexibility and decision-making authority may be granted to school sites, changing the role of district-level and site-level staff, parents and community members. The board may delegate some of its decisions to others. But the board remains ultimately accountable to the community for the quality of the education program, and therefore must be careful not to abandon its basic responsibilities as described below. Further information about the role of boards is available in CSBA's *Maximizing School Board Leadership* series (1996).

VISION

The board sets the direction for the school district by establishing a district mission or "vision" focused on student learning. This vision should encompass the broad goals and priorities of the district. Specifically, the board's role is to identify the present strengths and future needs of the district, use an appropriate process that involves all stakeholders, adopt a vision reflective of the community's expectations for student achievement, ensure the vision is kept as a vital force in the school district, regularly review the vision and keep the community informed about the district's progress toward achieving the vision.

Because the district's vision should drive all other district decisions and operations, it is important that reform and restructuring efforts are aligned with this vision. No efforts which conflict with the vision should be instituted. If the goals of the reform are not reflected in either the long-term vision or short-term goals, the board needs to re-examine both the vision and the reform goals. If the reform goals do not seem important compared to the district's other goals already included in the vision, then the reform may be a poor match for the district and other strategies should be developed to help the district's schools achieve the vision. If the reform goals are important, then the vision may need to be revised to reflect them. Perhaps the vision needs to be made more flexible to provide a structure that will allow change to occur. A vision that supports reform is one that is futuristic, relevant, realistic, unique to the needs and circumstances of the local community and broadly supported by the school community.

POLICY

Board policies should be clear, concise, narrowly focused descriptions of the board's beliefs and its direction for action. They explain *what* the board wants to happen and *why*, but do not prescribe detailed procedures for *how* an action is to be carried out. They may deal with topics related to the district's philosophy or goals, curriculum and instruction, student health and safety, community relations, administration, business operations, personnel, facilities or other school issues.

The board should ensure that its policies reflect the district's vision and is consistent with the goals of reform. If school safety is a district priority, are there board policies calling for a comprehensive safety plan, establishing guidelines for student discipline and addressing other safety issues? Is a goal of enhanced technology supported by an infrastructure that includes a district technology plan, board policies on student and employee use of technology, related professional development needs and facilities issues?

If decentralized decision making is part of a reform and restructuring effort, the board's policies must provide flexibility to school sites for certain decisions delegated by the board. For example, the board cannot give flexibility to school sites to determine their own professional development needs and then have a policy detailing what professional development will look like throughout the district. However, even when certain operational functions have been decentralized, the board must remember its continued responsibility for any actions in the district. Policies must reflect board authority (or the delegation of such authority) and accountability mechanisms.

Besides adopting appropriate policies, the board supports reform by providing community leadership in communicating and supporting these policies, and by monitoring, reviewing and revising policies to ensure their effectiveness.

CURRICULUM/PROGRAM ACCOUNTABILITY

The board has a responsibility to approve and monitor the curriculum used throughout the district. The board sets content and performance standards, adopts courses of study and instructional materials, provides a process for curriculum selection and review, ensures that the curriculum reflects the district vision, provides for related professional development and communicates the adopted curriculum to the community. Given the number of reform efforts that require different courses and curricula, one of the most essential roles of the board is to ensure compatibility with the overall district vision and consistency and articulation with other schools.

To successfully carry out these responsibilities, board members must be knowledgeable about theories and effective practices related to curriculum, instruction, student learning and assessment. However, they also must recognize the expertise of teachers, administrators, curriculum specialists and other staff in this area. Staff (along with parents and community members) need to be greatly involved in the process of recommending curricula and materials. In addition, once the curriculum is adopted, the professional staff takes over the actual implementation of that curriculum.

The board becomes involved again when it is time to evaluate program effectiveness.

The board sets assessment criteria, requires regular evaluations of the instructional program in all schools, reviews evaluation data and requires that programmatic changes be made when indicated by assessment results. As noted in Section II, an effective reform strategy must contain an evaluation component that specifies indicators of success, especially indicators related to improved student outcomes. It is often difficult to isolate the effects of one component of a broad reform effort, but it is important to try and to keep asking the question "What impact is this reform having on the achievement of *all* students?"

FINANCE

The board is responsible for adopting a budget which focuses on achieving the results described in its vision. In doing so, it has to consider many factors, including the past, present and future obligations of the district, the stability of funding sources, enrollment trends, legal requirements and constraints (e.g., categorical vs. unrestricted funds, ability to raise revenues), the effect of federal and state mandates, general fund encroachments and evolving district goals and priorities. Then it must continue to monitor the budget and make amendments as necessary.

Fiscal accountability cannot be forgotten in the effort to reform the educational program or the governance structure. In fact, the impact on district finances is one of the most critical questions a board faces in determining whether a reform effort is right for its district. The board needs to discuss the estimated start-up costs for reform and costs of sustaining the effort, where the resources will come from, whether the budgetary requirements of specific reforms are aligned with district priorities, whether site control of resources is desired and who will be accountable for those fiscal decisions, and whether one school's innovations will have a negative fiscal impact on other district programs. The board and district staff can play a key role in helping school sites to understand and consider the pragmatic issues surrounding school reform. Reforms can be successful only if they are supported by adequate resources and if the district can maintain its obligation to serve *all* schools and students.

In California, county offices have been granted special oversight functions to ensure fiscal accountability of district finances. The county board has no involvement, but the county superintendent is required to review districts' annual budget, two interim fiscal reports and the annual audit. The county superintendent, therefore, serves as a safety valve in ensuring that fiscal stability is maintained even when reforms have significant fiscal consequences.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Stability of staff, quality of staff leadership and staff's willingness to undertake change are critical to the successful implementation of reform. The board's primary involvement in personnel issues (i.e., its primary leverage point in ensuring that the district's human resources support reform) focuses on its relationship with the superintendent. It has a responsibility to ensure that superintendent selection and evaluation processes are aligned with the district's goals.

Strong leadership from the superintendent is necessary for successful school reform, and such leadership requires that the

superintendent support the particular reform effort and that he/she has the knowledge and skills to carry out the reform. The superintendent must ensure that all other staff are doing their jobs in a way that will enhance student achievement. A high level of trust, respect and teamwork between the board and superintendent also is necessary to provide the kind of district support that will be needed to succeed.

In most county offices of education, the county superintendent is elected rather than being appointed by the board and the board does not directly evaluate the superintendent. This gives the county board less leverage in ensuring that the personnel system supports county-level reforms, and demands an even greater voluntary cooperation between the board and superintendent to achieve the county's vision and goals.

The staffing requirements of reform and restructuring, and their impact on other district schools, are often some of the most problematic elements inherent in school reform. The board needs to determine the responsibility of hiring and dismissing staff and evaluation guidelines for staff involved in reform efforts. Teacher supply, certification/credentialing requirements, appropriate roles of certificated and classified staff, the impact on diversity goals for the district, the permanent status of staff and transfer rights all need to be discussed by the board to ensure the reform can be implemented effectively.

Furthermore, reform and restructuring efforts require high-quality and relevant staff development to carry out the goals and processes of particular reforms. Boards should ensure that such staff development is available and that inservice trainings are supported by the school culture, structures for ongoing dialogue among staff, adequate time for planning and time to conduct new responsibilities associated with the reform.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Contractual obligations often determine a district's ability to implement reform and restructuring strategies. Therefore, before a board supports a reform strategy, it must review existing collective bargaining agreements and ensure that it will not be violating the terms of those agreements.

Likewise, before the board adopts a new agreement with an employee organization, it must be aware of provisions which can either support or undermine the district's reform goals. Its negotiations and final agreement must be consistent with the district's vision. The board should strive to achieve enough flexibility in the agreement so as not to preclude unanticipated reform and restructuring needs. Flexibility may be desired in matters related to staff transfers, scheduling, job descriptions, hiring outside the contract, staff evaluations and discipline, seniority rights and other staff issues. Ongoing, positive relations with employee organizations are needed to build their support for trying new things and to increase their focus on the goal of student achievement.

However, the board should be careful about negotiating educational policy in areas outside the required scope of negotiations. Including reform elements within the contract limits the ability to make change before the term of the contract expires and gives the employee organization greater rights than other stakeholders in determining reform strate-

gies. Employee organizations and individual employees should have opportunities for providing input on education issues affecting the district, but there are more appropriate ways of providing such opportunities (e.g., school and district committees, board meetings or other hearings, employee surveys, etc.).

The role of the *county* board in collective bargaining is less clear because both the county superintendent and the county board of education are identified as the "employer" in the Educational Employment Relations Act (Government Code 3540 et seq.). In a 1983 case involving the Alameda County Board of Education, the Public Employment Relations Board determined that the county superintendent was the sole employer in terms of collective bargaining, and there has been no further litigation to test this ruling. Still, there must be strong cooperation between the board and superintendent to make sure that the county's primary fiscal documents – the budget (which is the ultimate responsibility of the board) and the collective bargaining agreement – work together to support the county's goals (California County Boards of Education, 1997).

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

The board's ability to be supportive of the community's desires for change is at the heart of any successful reform effort. The board must always ask itself whether the reform under consideration serves the best interests of the children and community.

The community must be viewed as a partner in the development of any reform effort. Its input must be welcome, and outreach should be conducted as necessary to ensure that a representative sector of the community is involved. The board must work to engage the community in the reform process, including the business community, other local government entities, organizations and/or individuals with an interest in the education and welfare of the community's children. In this context, teachers and other staff members may be viewed as part of the "community" whose support and involvement must be garnered.

The community's involvement should not stop once a reform strategy is selected. Its continuing input, support and involvement are crucial. Community members can help support reform efforts by providing suggestions and ideas, participating in decision-making structures, serving as classroom volunteers or mentors to students, providing resources and acting as advocates on behalf of the schools.

The board must work to build continuing community support for the reforms through communication to the public about the progress of implementation and indicators of program effectiveness. Because much of the community's perception and knowledge of its schools comes from the local media, effective media relations must be an important part of the board's communications strategy.

The board's advocacy role also can be used to help ensure that state and national reform efforts are focused on student achievement and are realistic. The board should establish ongoing relationships with legislators, become knowledgeable about the legislative process, adopt positions on critical issues and set priorities for advocacy that are aligned with reform goals.

COORDINATION

Because districts are continually changing to best serve the children in the community, there are often multiple reform and restructuring initiatives underway at any time. There is a danger of creating a series of unrelated, disjointed programs that divide staff, resources and energy. As difficult as it is, to be successful reforms must be aligned with and connected to other district or school-site efforts (see Section II).

Coordination of the many different initiatives and programs is primarily the responsibility of the superintendent and other administrators, but it is up to the board to ensure that coordination occurs. The board has the ability to ensure that reform efforts stay focused on districtwide goals and are compatible with each other. The board also must do what it can to ease concerns about fairness and equity ("How come our school/classroom doesn't have that?"). Issues of articulation and access are particularly challenging when reform efforts such as two-way language immersion, concentrated classes or other innovative approaches are tried.

The board can help to expand successful school-site reform efforts to other schools in the district through its policies, budget and community leadership. Information about effective practices should be shared throughout the district, and with other schools or districts in the state and nation.

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IV. APPENDIX
EXAMPLES OF EDUCATION REFORM EFFORTS

This appendix provides examples of state and national reform models and initiatives currently being implemented by significant numbers of schools or districts. It is not intended to be a comprehensive compilation. It provides a basic description of a number of programs, but is not intended to evaluate or endorse any particular program.

ACCELERATED SCHOOLS

The Accelerated Schools Project, launched at Stanford University in 1986 by Dr. Henry Levin, is based on the theory that at-risk students will perform better in classes that set high expectations and use educational strategies traditionally associated with gifted and talented students than they will in remedial classes with a slower pace and simplified curriculum. Key principles include (1) unity of purpose with all members of the school community working together toward a common set of goals, (2) shared decision making at the school site and shared accountability, and (3) recognition and use of the knowledge, talents and resources of every member of the school community in building upon the school's strengths.

Each school follows the same basic philosophy but sets its own vision and goals. Accelerated Schools go through a process of restructuring which starts with a collaborative "taking stock" period of determining where the school community is and where it wants to go. Participants then identify priority areas, brainstorm potential solutions, synthesize those solutions, pilot experimental programs and evaluate those programs.

The governance structure of Accelerated Schools is a tri-level system consisting of cadres or working committees which meet weekly for discussion and decision making; a broad-based steering committee which serves as an information clearinghouse and ensures that the cadres stay on track; and the school-as-a-whole which approves decisions put forth by the cadres.

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Governance

ANNENBERG CHALLENGE

In 1993, former U.S. Ambassador Walter Annenberg issued a grant challenge for educators in metropolitan areas around the country to reform schools by setting high academic standards for all students, assessing students' learning and using this information to improve learning of individual students, creating learning communities where students are well known, devolving resources and authority to the school site level, developing small systems of schools in supportive networks and mobilizing community support. Two projects emerged in California: the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (BASRC) and the Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project (LAAMP).

BASRC uses its funding to support whole-school change rather than isolated projects. The focus is on high expectations for every student; opportunities for every student to meet those high expectations; the academic, emotional and social learning needs of each child; and professional discourse and development around teaching and learning.

LAAMP also focuses on systemwide transformation. Its goals are to foster high levels of student achievement through the creation of stable learning communities, support the development of high and consistent expectations for adults and students, generate trust among students and between students and adults, and create measurable indicators of progress. Other goals intended to support the efforts of educators address social services, professional development, school-to-career programs and district practices. A challenging curriculum, parent involvement, decentralized decision making, reallocation of professional time, and accountability also are addressed in LAAMP's plan.

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development, Governance, Student Support/Services, Parent Involvement, Accountability

California Reading Initiative

An example of a reform initiative focused on a single subject area, the California Reading Initiative of 1996 provided $200.9 million in funding from two sources: $167 million from the state's general fund for activities described in AB 3482 (Ch. 196, Statutes of 1996) and $33.9 from California's Goals 2000 funds. Funds were targeted for core reading instructional materials in grades K-3, staff development and leadership training.

To obtain funding for instructional materials under this initiative, districts had to ensure that the materials addressed fundamental skills, including phonemic awareness, systematic explicit phonics and spelling patterns. Similarly, trainings for K-3 teachers, board members, administrators and teacher leaders were required to address these three areas, plus diagnosis of reading deficiencies; research on how children learn to read; research on how proficient readers read; structure of the English language; relationships among reading, writing and spelling; planning and delivery of appropriate reading instruction based on assessment and evaluation; means of improving reading comprehension; and students' independent reading of good books and the relationship of that activity to improved reading performance.

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development

Challenge Initiative

The Challenge Initiative was developed and introduced by California State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin in fall 1995 as a standards-based reform effort. Although some of the elements of the reform effort were revised following its introduction, the philosophy behind the initiative remains the same. At its core, the initiative is designed to encourage districts to raise student achievement by adopting standards, setting more stringent course requirements and holding districts, schools and students accountable for achieving the standards.

The initiative includes a number of other elements to supplement the increased academic expectations, such as local assessment and accountability systems, school safety, facilities and technology, family-school partnerships, student learning plans, school-site decision making, staff and community training, graduations requirements and availability of a Golden State Achievement Certificate (an enhanced high school diploma).

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Facilities, Parental Involvement, Professional Development, Accountability

CHARTER SCHOOLS

Since 1991, when Minnesota established the first charter schools, 26 states and the District of Columbia have passed some form of charter school legislation. California joined the movement in 1992. Charter schools are free from most state regulations; instead, they operate under the terms and conditions specified under their own "charters." Therefore, it is envisioned that they should be freer to implement innovations which improve teaching and learning.

California law (Education Code 47600-47616.5) specifies issues which must be addressed by charter school petitioners. These include a description of the educational program, measurable student outcomes, evaluation methods, governance structure, staff qualifications, health and safety procedures, suspension and expulsion procedures, attendance issues and employee rights. A petition to establish a charter school must be approved by the board of a local district or county office of education. The board also has a responsibility to approve any charter revisions, renew charters or revoke a charter as necessary when a school fails to comply with its charter provisions or fails to meet its legal and fiscal obligations.

The Legislative Analyst's Office is currently conducting an evaluation of California's existing charter schools as required by AB 2135.

Key Areas of Reform: Governance, Accountability, other areas depending on terms of charter

CLASS SIZE REDUCTION PROGRAM

California's Class Size Reduction Program of 1996 earmarked $771 million in state funds to reduce class sizes to 20 in grades K-3. The legislation included specific requirements for grade-level priorities, beginning with grade 1, then grade 2, and then either kindergarten or grade 3.

Districts could choose to provide either full-day or half-day class size reductions, with a requirement for the half-day option that the instructional minutes in that half day be devoted primarily to the subject areas of reading and math. There was also a requirement for staff development addressing individualized instruction, effective teaching in smaller classes, identification of and response to student needs, and opportunities to build on the individual strengths of students.

Funds for facilities-related costs associated with the Class Size Reduction Program were also available. Districts could receive $25,000 for each new class established by the district which could not be housed in existing facilities.

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development, Facilities

COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS

The Coalition of Essential Schools was established in 1984 at Brown University under the leadership of Theodore R. Sizer. It follows no specific model, rejecting top-down standardized solutions to school problems. Instead, it is based on the belief that schools gain stability by accommodating the needs, character, strengths and weaknesses of the community. There are over 150 public, private and parochial

schools affiliated with the coalition, the majority of which are high schools.

Major principles include clear, simple school goals that apply to all students; ways of reaching the goals tailored to each student; active learning; standards for advancing to higher levels of schooling; graduation based on students' mastery of essential skills; greater decision making by school staff; broader responsibilities for school staff; competitive wages and ample time for planning and collaboration by staff, reducing peripheral school services as needed to accomplish this; and parent involvement in school planning and operations.

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Governance, Professional Development/Human Resources, Parent Involvement

COMER'S SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

This school reform strategy is based on the child development principles of Dr. James P. Comer and the structure and operating principles of the Yale University Child Study Center's School Development Program. Established in 1968, the strategy is now being implemented in more than 600 schools and 65 districts throughout 21 states and the District of Columbia. The reform model is committed to the total development of children by creating learning environments that support children's physical, cognitive, psychological, language, social and ethical development. It emphasizes parent participation, integrated social and educational services and a teamwork approach to school management.

The nine-component model contains three "mechanisms" – (1) a School Planning and Management Team representing parents, teachers, administrators and support staff; (2) a Student and Staff Support Team (formerly called the Mental Health Team); and (3) a Parent Team. The School Planning and Management Team carries out three critical "operations" – (1) the development of a comprehensive school plan with specific goals to improve school climate and academic areas, (2) staff development activities, and (3) periodic assessment of the program. Finally, successful implementation requires three "guiding principles" or agreements – (1) a "no fault" approach to solving problems, (2) consensus decision making rather than voting, and (3) collaboration with the principal who is often the team's leader.

Key Areas of Reform: Student Support/ Services, Parent Involvement, Governance, Professional Development, Curriculum and Instruction, Accountability

GOALS 2000: EDUCATE AMERICA ACT

The federal Goals 2000: Educate America Act (Public Law 103-227) was signed into law by President Clinton in 1994. This legislation codified six national education goals which had been adopted in 1989 by President Bush and the National Governors Association, and added two more goals. Thus, Goals 2000 establishes a series of goals to be achieved by the year 2000 related to school readiness; school completion; student achievement and citizenship; teacher education and professional development; mathematics and science; adult literacy and lifelong learning; safe, disciplined and alcohol- and drug-free schools; and parental participation.

Goals 2000 also set up certain structures at the federal level designed to support

achievement of these goals, and established a grants program for developing state and local education reform plans. In 1995, 168 consortia of schools received first-year grants in California. In 1996, it was decided that most of the state's Goals 2000 funds would be used to support the state's emphasis on reading instruction and the Governor's Reading Initiative.

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development, Student Support/Services, Parent Involvement

GRADE-LEVEL REFORMS: FROM "READY OR NOT" TO "SECOND TO NONE"

From 1987 to 1992, a series of California task forces provided recommendations for the education of the state's four- to six-year-olds, elementary students, middle school students and secondary students. These recommendations were followed by statewide networks designed to support the implementation of the reforms.

The state School Readiness Task Force provided recommendations regarding the education of young children in its 1988 report *Here They Come: Ready or Not!* The report addressed the question "What kind of education is necessary during the crucial early years of a child's life – from ages 4 through 6 – to prepare them for the 21st century?" The 12 major recommendations called for an integrated, experiential curriculum; reduced class sizes; programs that meet the special needs of students, reflect their heterogeneous skills, provide a full-day option and link with child development programs; improved assessment methods; parental involvement; appropriate staff training and pay; funding and support; remodeled facilities; and a public awareness campaign describing appropriate learning practices for children ages 4 through 6.

Elementary education reform was addressed in the 1992 report *It's Elementary*. The 32 recommendations of the Elementary Grades Task Force focused on children's access to a "rich, meaning-centered, thinking curriculum." It included strategies for instruction, scheduling, early intervention, academic support, the education of English learners, use of technology, professional growth, recruitment and retention of teachers, student assessment, the learning environment, and coordination of children's services. Grade-level retention was discouraged. Districts were encouraged to empower school sites to take the initiative on reforms and to hold schools accountable for reaching agreed-upon outcomes.

Caught in the Middle, published in 1987, addressed the needs of students in grades 6 through 8. Noting the personal and academic characteristics of students in these grades, the Middle Grade Task Force provided a series of recommendations related to curriculum and instruction; the intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of students; school organization and structure; professional preparation and development; and the roles of parents, communities and school boards.

In 1992, the California High School Task Force issued *Second to None: A Vision of the New California High School*, and with it launched a major reform effort in the state to improve high school education. Recommendations were made within six broad categories: (1) creating curricular paths to success; (2) developing powerful teaching and learning; (3) establishing a comprehensive accountability and assessment

system; (4) providing comprehensive support for all students, including language-minority students and those at risk of failure; (5) restructuring the school; and (6) creating new professional roles.

In the area of curriculum, the report recommended the development of a core curriculum for grades 9-10 and, for grades 11-12, organized programs through majors and study clusters. Integration of academic and vocational instruction, individual learning plans, new course sequences, increased student choice, flexible scheduling and organization of physical facilities by clusters also were addressed. Site-based decision making and decentralization were other themes.

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development/ Human Resources, Student Support/ Services, Governance, Parent Involvement, Facilities, Accountability

HEALTHY START

California's Healthy Start Support Services for Children Act (SB 620; Ch. 759, 1991) encourages local interagency collaboration to more effectively deliver education and support services. Implemented by the California Department of Education, the program awards planning grants and operational grants to help local educational agencies and their collaborative partners provide educational, health, mental health, social and other support services located at or near schools. Partners may include schools, districts, county offices of education, health and human service agencies, county governments, nonprofit organizations, businesses and others who serve children and families.

Planning grants may be awarded for two years and operational grants for three years. Applicants must provide matching funds or resources equal to a quarter of the grant amount.

A statewide evaluation of the program was conducted from 1993 to 1995. Among the positive findings for the children and families served were statistically significant educational gains, especially for students in grades K-3; reduced student mobility; improved access to health and dental care; success in meeting child care and transportation needs; and a reduction, by half or more, in the need for food and clothing.

Key Areas of Reform: Student Support/ Services, Parent Involvement

KENTUCKY EDUCATION REFORM ACT OF 1990 (KERA)

This major education reform plan was the Kentucky legislature's response to a Kentucky Supreme Court decision which found the state's school finance system unconstitutional and unequal. Along with a significant increase in school funding, the legislation provided for site-based management (school site councils consisting of three teachers, two parents and the principal have considerable authority over curriculum, instruction and selection of the principal), standards, outcome-based evaluation, performance-based assessment, continuing educational opportunities beyond the minimum school term, ungraded primary schools, an option for districts to develop alternative certification programs for middle and secondary schools, and assessment programs for principals and superintendents.

The legislation also created family resource and youth services centers, a half-day preschool program for all four-year-olds at risk of educational failure and a

system of rewards and sanctions based on school performance.

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Governance, Finance, Student Support/Services, Professional Development/Human Resources, Accountability

LOS ANGELES EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR RESTRUCTURING NOW (LEARN)

LEARN is a comprehensive, systemic reform effort in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The LEARN reform plan was developed over a year by a broad-based community group initiated by business leaders and including parents, teachers, administrators and community leaders. Adopted as policy by the board of education in 1991, it has grown from its original 35 schools to over 300 schools in the district. Its goals are to enable students to participate in a democratic society, make a successful transition to the workforce or advanced education, have an enriched education experience and demonstrate measurable growth in academic experiences and achievement.

LEARN is based on the premise that reform starts by decentralizing decision-making authority and responsibility to school sites in order to bring accountability closer to persons who most affect student learning – principals, teachers, parents and community leaders. In addition, the reform effort includes but is not limited to creating a new collaborative school culture, improving the education profession, strengthening the curriculum, providing a safe school environment, better preparing children for school, addressing the social services needs of students and their families, preparing students for the realities of the workplace and restructuring the fiscal and facilities systems.

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Governance, Professional Development, Parent Involvement, Student Support/Services, Facilities, Finance, Accountability

NEW AMERICAN SCHOOLS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

NASDC was founded as a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization in 1991 to promote school change and help schools meet the national education goals adopted by President Bush and the National Governors Association in 1990. Proposals for school system design had the following constraints: The design must enable all students to achieve world-class standards in core academic subjects, operation costs must be comparable to current schools and the design must address all aspects of a school's operations. Many of the designs submitted were developed through partnerships with established education reform projects, state education departments, universities and coalitions.

Of the 11 designs initially field tested, seven models have advanced into the third phase of the program. These include the ATLAS (Authentic Teaching, Learning and Assessment for All Students) Communities, Audrey Cohen College, Co-NECT Schools, Expeditionary Learning/Outward Bound, Modern Red Schoolhouse, National Alliance for Restructuring Education and Roots and Wings.

All the models address curriculum and instruction, although the philosophy and focus of the seven models vary. Other elements found in some models include flexible scheduling, increased use of

technology, professional development, standards, individualized teaching and support services for students and families.

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Parent Involvement, Professional Development, Governance, Student Support/Services, Accountability

PRIVATIZATION

Many districts already contract with private companies for a variety of services needed by the district. Beginning in the late 1980s, however, some districts have turned over to private companies the whole-scale management of their administration and/or education programs. The aim is to provide more efficient and effective school administration while also providing a profit for the company. Most privatization efforts focus on bringing private sector business practices to the administration of a district's schools.

The most visible programs have been those of Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI) and the Edison Project. EAI uses the Tesseract curriculum, which stresses that children must have the freedom to work at their own pace and assesses students on how well they meet their individual goals. Towards that end, EAI includes the following objectives in their management strategy: enhanced instruction, more funds for supplies and teaching materials, personal education plans for each student, individual attention, increased use of classroom technology, professional development for teachers, parent/community involvement, safe and well-maintained schools, and sound, efficient school management.

The Edison Project is a comprehensive effort to reorganize schools through academies, provide longer school days and school year, focus on core subject areas, use teaching methods that motivate students, provide accountability through careful assessment, increase technology use, develop a new partnership with parents, tailor schools to their community and decentralize decision making.

Districts in Hartford, Baltimore, Minneapolis and Boston have experimented with privatization with mixed results. A General Accounting Office report found improved school attendance, parental involvement, facilities and technology among schools with private management, yet Baltimore and Hartford withdrew from their contracts with EAI amidst concerns about decreasing student performance and high costs.

Key Areas of Reform: Governance, other areas depending on terms of contract

RECONSTITUTION

Reconstitution refers to the practice of completely restaffing a school that has demonstrated low performance in order to hire new staff who believe in and are committed to a new direction for the school. It has also been referred to as "vacating the faculty," "school redesign" or "professional responsibility program."

Reconstitution has most notably been tried in San Francisco Unified School District, which implemented the program in order to comply with a court-ordered desegregation plan. Low-performing schools are identified on the basis of changes in test scores; attendance, suspension and dropout rates; student grades; review of the school's portfolio; a site visit by a review panel; and an oral presentation to the review panel and superintendent about the school's efforts to improve minority student achievement. Before reconstituting the school, extra resources and assistance are provided. These resources have not aleays

been consistently offered. For example, a central administrator is assigned to help write and implement an education plan, the school has access to a management expert, discretionary funds are provided and flexibility is allowed in the use of categorical funds. Then, if reconstitution is still considered necessary, all of a school's personnel – including administrators and teachers – are removed, and those who reapply for their jobs compete with new applicants. Tenured staff who are removed are given positions at other schools.

Despite strong resistance from employee unions and mixed support of school boards, reconstitution has been growing and has been adopted or considered by school systems in Denver, Houston, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Maryland and others.

Key Areas of Reform: Accountability, Professional Development/Human Resources

SB 1274 RESTRUCTURING PROGRAM

Established in 1990 and scheduled to end in 1996-97, the SB 1274 demonstration program in restructuring provided first-year planning grants to help schools develop restructuring proposals and demonstration grants in subsequent years to fund actual program operation. SB 1274 required that half the grants be given to low-performing schools.

Participating schools were required to address five core restructuring elements: (1) instructional strategies designed to meet high subject matter standards; (2) involvement of school staff and parents; (3) expanded use of technology to support student learning; (4) expanded opportunities for students in grades 11 and 12 to attend college classes, enroll in specialized schools and participate in internships; and (5) establishment and integration of early childhood education, contingent upon separate state funding. The level of community support and departure from traditional schooling also were considered in awarding grants.

Essentially a program for individual school sites, the district's role was to develop policies to increase site-based decision making, specify achievement outcomes for all students in core competencies, establish a definition of educational quality and clear goals for achieving it, giving schools both flexibility and support to meet the goals and holding schools accountable for student performance.

Key Areas of Reform: Curriculum and Instruction, Parent Involvement, Governance

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The state's School Improvement Program was established in 1978 to improve instruction, auxiliary services, school environment and school organization. Although legislation which established the program sunsetted in 1987, funding for the program continues and must be used for the intended purposes of the program. Participating schools establish a school site council, with a majority of the members being teachers and also including the principal, other school personnel, parents and, in high schools, student representatives.

These school site councils develop school improvement plans to guide activities. After the governing board has approved the plan, the school site council assumes responsibility for the ongoing review of its implementation and evaluation.

Specific elements of the plan are no longer required but, based on the previous

legislation, often address curricula, instructional strategies, materials, instructional and auxiliary services to meet the needs of English learners, a staff development program, parent involvement, classroom and school environments (including relationships among students, staff, parents and the community, as well as reduction of school violence), and outcome measures for evaluating and modifying the school improvement plan.

Key Areas of Reform: Governance, Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development, Accountability, Parent Involvement, Student Support/Services

We're in it for the kids.

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